9 A

SERMON

Preach'd in the

Parish-Church of *Burcester* in the County of *Oxford*,

ON THE

Second Day of *December*, 1697.

Being the Day appointed for

A THANKSGIVING

To Almighty God,

For His Majesty's Safe Return, and for the Happy and Honourable PEACE, of which God has made Him the *Glorious Instrument*.

By *THOMAS TAYLOR*, M. A.

LONDON,
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Mr T. Taylors Thanks Serm at Burcester 2. Dec. 21 Prov. 30 31. 169

Prov. XXI. 30, 31.

There is no wiſdom, nor underſtanding, nor counſel againſt the Lord.
The Horſe is prepared againſt the day of Battel, but ſafety is of the Lord.

IN theſe words the Wiſe Man gives a brief, but true, and compleat account, of the weakneſs and inſufficiency of all humane indeavours, when imployed againſt the purpoſes of Divine Providence, or deſtitute of the Intereſt, and Aſſiſtance of Heaven. He declares that the beſt laid Projects, and Contrivances, the deepeſt reaches of the Wiſeſt Politicians, when directed againſt the Tendencies of the Divine Will, are vain and inſignificant; that they come to nothing: *There is no* ſuch thing as *Wiſdom, or Underſtanding, or Counſel againſt the Lord.* And as the Wiſdom of Man is in this caſe no better than Folly, and Madneſs; ſo is his Power the contemptible Effort of Impotence and Preſumption. *The Horſe is prepared againſt the day of Battel; but ſafety is of the Lord.* Thoſe numerous Forces and hoſtile Preparations, which Men confide in as their utmoſt ſecurity, unleſs bleſs'd and reinforced with Power from on High, are ineffectual to Victory, or Safety.

There is no King ſaved by the Multitude of an Hoſt; A mighty Man is not delivered by much Strength; An Horſe is a vain thing for ſafety; neither ſhall he deliver any by his great Strength; ſays the Royal Pſalmiſt, who had frequently experienced Worldly ſtrength, and confidence, to be an Pſal. 33. 16, 17.

unequal match for the God of Hosts, the mighty God of *Israel*. The sum and meaning therefore of the words amounts to this; That there is a superintendant Providence, which over-rules the Counsels and Powers of Men, as shall be most suitable and serviceable to the Divine Counsels in the Government of the World; which either succours and incourages, or suspends and retards, or baffles and disappoints natural causes, so as to determine the issues of War and Peace, and of all humane Force and Policy, according to this supreme Agency and Direction. That the World is subject to the Presidency, and conduct of such a Providence as this, must be acknowledged by all, who profess to believe the existence of a God. For the very notion of a Providence is inseparably involved in the Idea of an infinitely Wise, Powerful, and Beneficent Being; nothing seeming more absurd, than that He who is All-wise should not know how, He that is Almighty should not be able, and He that is transcendantly Good should not be willing to take care of his own Creation. And therefore *Epicurus* was deservedly charged with Hypocrisy and Collusion, and look'd upon by the rest of the Philosophers as a disguised Atheist, who in words profess'd a Deity, but in reality and effect, disown'd Him, when he denyed he had any interest in the Government of the World. A Man need but open his Eyes and contemplate those common changes, and vicissitudes of things, which daily happen round about him, to be fully convinc'd of this truth, that the Lord is King, and that he rules unto the ends of the Earth. That I may not therefore take up your Time and Thoughts with an unnecessary proof of a Providence, which all Religions in the World suppose, and which the Christian has plainly implyed, or demonstrated in every page of the Gospel: I rather chuse to lead your Minds at present to an attentive Reflexion on the various methods of its dispensations, which is no less useful, yet a more uncommon and difficult

difficult conſideration. For though the directive hand of a ſupernatural Providence be ſo very viſible and palpable in its effects, it ſeems quite otherwiſe in the manner of its Operation. We often feel, and enjoy the Influence of the Divine Government, whileſt we are inſenſible by what kind of Miniſtration it is conveyed to us. The Counſels of God are for the moſt part Myſterious and Impenetrable: *He maketh Darkneſs his ſecret Place, his Pavilion round about him:* ſays holy David. *He doth great things, and unſearchable, marvellous things without number:* ſaies *Job*, ſpeaking of his providential adminiſtration. *Pſal.* 18. 11. *Job* 5. 9.

'Tis indeed impoſſible to trace the footſteps of the Almighty, in his whole management of humane affairs; but yet thoſe many Characters and Impreſſes of his Hand, which are legible in the wonderful events of things, are ſufficient to juſtify ſuch an humble enquiry into the manner of his procedure, as may ſerve to remove all prophane objections againſt his Providence, and to encourage our Faith, Hope, and Confidence in Him. Wherefore, my preſent buſineſs ſhall be to conſider,

Firſt, Some of thoſe ways, and methods which God makes uſe of to govern, or over-rule the Counſels and indeavours of Men, ſo as to accompliſh his own wiſe purpoſes thereby.

Secondly, The reaſon and intention of his interpoſing his Providence in the Government of Humane Affairs and Actions.

Thirdly, I ſhall apply theſe conſiderations to that particular Providence and Mercy of God which is the occaſion of this preſent ſolemnity: by which it will at laſt evidently appear; that *There is neither Wiſdom, nor Underſtanding, nor Counſel againſt the Lord; that though the Horſe be prepared againſt the day of Battel, yet ſafety is of the Lord.*

Firſt,

First, Then to consider some of those Methods, which God makes use of, to govern, or over-rule the Counsels, and endeavours of Men, so as to accomplish his own wise purposes thereby.

If God govern'd the World at present as he did heretofore the Nation of the Jews, by a visible Authority, and vouchsafed it such repeated Prophecies, and evident Miracles, and manifestations of his Power, in his Mercies, and Judgments to Mankind; the manner of his Providence might be easier accounted for, in those great turns of affairs, he brings about in the Kingdoms of the Earth. For that People were generally so miraculously Bless'd, or Afflicted, that they could no more doubt of the *Manner*, than they could question the *truth* of the Deliverance, or Punishment it self which they actually enjoyed, or suffer'd. If an *Israelite* were ask'd, how he escaped the Host of *Pharaoh*, and how he was sustained in a barren Wilderness forty Years, it were ready for him to answer to the Former, That God divided the red Sea, and made the surrounding waves Bullworks of safety, against the Enemy; and to the latter, That the same God opened the Rock of Stone, and made the Waters flow, and rained Manna, and Quails from Heaven, for his daily provision, and support. For thus God found it necessary to deal with an incredulous, and sluggish people, who would ever have been revolting back towards *Ægypt*, if he had not submitted his Providence, and Care over them, to the Test of their very Senses, and caused them constantly to tast and feel how gracious he was to them. But he no longer transacts with mankind by such obvious, and condescending instances of his Power: Though he has an equal regard to his People at this day, yet he deals with them in a way, more suitable to the exercise of their Reason, and their Faith, and becoming his own Wisdom: He raises and depresses Nations by such easie steps, and cadencies, that it is extreamly difficult to discover any

any break or interruption in the whole ſeries of ſecond cauſes, whereby to give birth to his deſigns in the Prodigious Revolutions of the World. The great Opera of his Providence is carried on in ſo uninterrupted a Tenor, and all its Machines are acted with that facility, and evenneſs, that nothing but uniform Nature preſents its ſelf to the Vulgar Spectators eye; whileſt the more inquiſitive Chriſtian, and Philoſopher carry their reſearches up to that inviſible hand, which directs the innumerable reſorts, and movements: and which teaches them all to conſpire in the finiſhing thoſe wonderful events propos'd by Divine Wiſdom in the government of Mankind. Now amongſt the various ways, and methods which his Counſel may imploy to his end, the more eaſily accounted for are theſe following: *Firſt*, He influences the Thoughts, Deſires, and Paſſions of man's Mind, in ſuch a Manner as is moſt proper to facilitate, and carry on the Work he intends.

If we conſider God as an Infinite and Almighty Spirit, in whom we live, and move and exiſt, we cannot avoid concluding that he is immediately preſent to every Soul which he has created; and is as capable of ruling, and directing them, as they are of actuating and moving thoſe Bodies to which they are united. They intirely depend upon him for their Being, and capacities: So that 'tis inconceivable how they ſhould be inveſted with a Power of Willing, unleſs *God gave them both to Will, and do*: Or whence they could derive their Underſtanding, did not the *Father of Lights enlighten every one that he ſent into the World.* And if theſe two principal Powers of the Mind, are ſo abſolutely dependent on him; 'tis no wonder that he frequently determines their particular operations; That he inſpires them with a new train of Thoughts and Intentions; That here preſents to them very moving Ideas; That he Careſſes their Deſires, with grateful, and inviting Objects; That he quickens their Hopes, or hightens their Fears,

or

or excites such other Passions, as have a Natural tendency towards promoting his designs for the wellfare and happiness of the World. Nor doth the Liberty he has indowed them with, in the least exempt them from his Jurisdiction, any more than the privileges of Subjects discharge them from their subjection to the Authority of their Soveraign. Indeed the consequences of such extraordinary suggestions are not of alike importance in all, but vary according to Mens Publick or private capacities, and Relations in the World; For as a King is worth ten thousands of the people (as the *Israelites* told *David*) so are the purposes of his Heart, proportionably of greater moment, towards the well or ill-being of Mankind. A King's word is accompanied with power, and the affairs of Men are vastly the better or the worse, according as this power is imploy'd. If like *Titus*'s, it be exercised only for the Publick Good, and *that the day be reckoned lost to a Prince*, in which he has not been beneficial to some or other: Both himself and his Fortune, are the *Joy and delight of Humane Nature*. But if like *Nero*'s the same Power please it self in Ruine and Devastation, 'tis a publick Scourge and Calamity, and one of the greatest Curses that God can send into the World. And now considering how much Humane Happiness, or Misery, depend upon the Wisdom or Folly, the Righteousness or Wickedness of Governours; how necessary is it, *that the Hearts of Kings should be in the hand of the Lord, and that like the Rivers of Waters he should turn them whithersoever he will:* How would the World run to confusion, and become one great Den of wild Beasts, or more ravenous Men, if great Oppressors could effect their unweildy projects, and God *did not carry the counsels of the Froward headlong?* And unless he likewise restrain'd the madness of the multitude and struck them with an Awe and Reverence of Majesty, though in a Person in many respects

Amici, diem perdidi. Sueton. in vit. Tit.

Prov. 21. 1.

reſpects not unlike themſelves. How could good Princes eſtabliſh their Government in Righteouſneſs, and prove ſuch Univerſal Bleſſings as we find them? Indeed he frequently ſerves himſelf of the inſatiable ambition of unmerciful Tyrants, no leſs than of the generous and beneficent deſigns of the beſt, and kindeſt Governours, and that by way of judgment on a wicked Generation; when that end is obtain'd, he degrades their aſpiring thoughts, as he once did *Nebuchadnezzar*'s, from believing themſelves the Gods, to the acknowledging themſelves the Beaſts of the Earth.

The Scripture preſents us with variety of inſtances, wherein the ſupreme Lord of the World has made the actings of an Humane Mind, inſtrumental to the effecting the Work of his Providence. How did *Pharaoh*'s incredulity, and obſtinacy to purſue the *Iſraelites* into the Red-Sea adminiſter an occaſion to God to exalt his Power, in the deſtin'd deſtruction of him and his whole Hoſt? How did he raiſe the Siege of *Samaria*, when reduced to the utmoſt extremity by Famine, by cauſing ſuddain fears and fancies to put to flight the *Syrian* Army? How did he preſerve *David* and his handful of Men from the deſtructive iſſues of *Achitophel*'s Counſel, by determining the People to prefer that of *Huſhai* before it? For by this choice it muſt be, that *the Lord* (as the text tells us) *had appointed to defeat the good Counſel of Achitophel.* 2 *Kings* 17. 14. I will mention but one example more, and that's of *Cyrus*, who aſcending his Throne with as great Ambition and Glory, and as little affection to the Jewiſh Nation as any of his Predeceſſors, could not reſiſt the Impreſſions God made upon his Mind, to reſtore the Captive People, and to rebuild the Temple: *The Lord ſtirr'd up the Spirit of* Cyrus *King of* Perſia, Saies the ſacred Hiſtorian, *Ezra* 1. 1. 'Twere needleſs to ſpend time in proving That God influences the Mind of Man, in bringing to paſs the reſult of his own Counſel, were not they apt to over-look the

Divine Efficacy, and to aſcribe the ſucceſs or diſappointment of the moſt important actions, to Time or Chance, to Fate or Fortune, or any thing rather than to the Finger of God: Whereas did they impartially obſerve how inconſiderable Moments turned the Scale in the weightieſt Concerns; how ſome unexpected accident, ſurprize, or inadvertency frequently determin'd the Fate of a Battel, and gave riſe to the moſt Glorious and Heroical Actions, beyond the intrinſick Vertue, and Efficacy of their cauſes: How the Peace and Proſperity of a Nation, depended on the nice and critical Conjuncture of ſome lucky hits of Counſel and Action; they would quickly perceive that the train of conſequences was laid by a Divine Artiſt; and that it was God, who, by ſome ſecret Energy, touch'd the Hearts of Men, and thereby put all the Wheels of his Providence in Motion. And here I cannot but Anticipate my Method, in mentioning that Memorable act of Providence, manifeſted but the other day, in the Perſon of our Royal Soveraign: For what leſs than a Divine Impulſe could have forc'd him upon that ſeeming impracticable Attempt, of reſcuing the *Metropolis* of a Country from immediate Ruine and Deſolation, which obliged him to break through the impending dangers of twice as numerous an Enemy, the difficulties of a precipitate March, and the diſcouragements of his Army? An attempt more glorious than the compleateſt Victory, as was plain by the Succeſs, which was ſpeedily followed with an Happy Concluſion of a General Peace, and the Security of *Europe*. But this Method of God's influencing the Minds of Men in his Government of the World, will be more conſpicuous when illuſtrated with a ſecond Conſideration.

Secondly, That He imploys the General Efficacy and Power of Natural Cauſes, and makes them ſubſervient to the ends and purpoſes of his Providence.

The fixt and ſtanding Laws of Nature, are nothing elſe but

but the General Will of an All-wiſe and Univerſal Being, who holds the Reins of the Univerſe in his Hands, and turns them which way he pleaſes. There is nothing in this World except Man, that he hath made the Arbiter of its own actions. All other things do not ſo properly act, as ſuffer his Agency upon them. Bodies are continually moved by thoſe impreſſions which he has given them. *As he ſpake the word, and they were made, he commanded and they were created,* ſo the ſame Power which created them, ſtill governs, and determines them. *Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapour, Wind and Storm fulfil his word.* He makes the Winds his Miniſters, and Flames of Fire his Meſſengers. Life and Death, Health and Sickneſs, Riches and Poverty, Plenty and Famine, and the whole Retinue of Nature, are all the Attendants of his Pleaſure, and the Inſtruments of his Power: And if ſo, what an infinite ſcope is here, for the compaſſing his deſigns in the free Government of a rational World, by the Miniſtry of natural and neceſſary Cauſes? For what is there in the whole Circle of humane actions, and ſublunary Occurrences, but falls under the influence of ſome of theſe? So that it ſeems had it ſo pleas'd God, he might have brought about the whole courſe of his greater Providential Diſpenſations, from the beginning of the World to the end of it, without making one irregular or unequal ſtep, or departing out of the common road of Nature. If the Sins of a degenerate Race of Men, are ripen'd into an Harveſt for Divine Vengeance, there is no need that the Almighty ſhould create Thunderbolts to execute his wrath; He can quickly draw an Artillery out of the Stores of Nature, ſufficient to overthrow a Luſtful City, or a Lewd and Vicious World. For even that Exemplary Judgment on Mankind, in an Univerſal Deluge, which ſeems to abound with Miracle, and which *Moſes* deſcribes by the rupture of the Abyſs, and the deſcending Cataracts of Heaven, is lookt upon by moſt thinking Perſons, to

have been effected by a Providential uſe of ſecond Cauſes, and that it will very well bear a Natural Explication. And it is not improbable, but that other deſtruction which the Earth ſtill waits by Fire, will be wrought by the concurrence of Natural Principles, and Powers in ſubſervience to the Will of God, when he ſhall think fit to permit that raging Element, to accompliſh the great and fatal Revolution. Nor doth this at all derogate from the Divine Wiſdom, but exalt and vindicate it, in that it is not like a Mortal Underſtanding, at a pauſe, what extraordinary courſe to take in the exigencies of affairs, but ſtill makes its Providence keep pace with Nature, and leiſurely produce thoſe ſignal Changes and Alterations which are ſubjects for Wonder and Admiration to all Ages: But to place this Pourtraicture of Divine Providence in a clearer light, let us only conſider, that theſe two Inſtruments of it, *Life* and *Death*, are in the hand of God; and obſerve how the intereſts of the World, in a great meaſure, turn upon theſe two Hinges. For Example, how does a Nation thrive, and proſper under the gentle Life, and Government of a Wiſe, a Pious, and a Valiant Prince. He is the Soul that animates the Body Politick, that gives it Health and Vigour, and ſuccors every Member with a generous warmth, and activity: Under ſuch a Reign how thankfully will the People enjoy the Bleſſings of Peace, or ſtrenuouſly Proſecute a lawful War for their mutual Defence and Vindication? Their Reputation will improve their Commerce, and their Induſtry make Plenty flow in their Streets. Their Church and Religion will erect its Head, and by returning the joyful Offerings of Praiſe and Gratitude for all the Mercies it receives, engage the Favour of Heaven ſtill on in its ſupport and preſervation. And now if it pleaſe God to continue theſe Bleſſings to them, he need but lengthen the days of ſuch a Governour, as he did *Hezekiah*'s, and then the deſigns of Providence, will be anſwer'd by the very intention

tention of Nature, without recurrence to Miracles, or bringing Prodigies on the Stage. But oh! then the Death of this great and good Man is as tragically lamented, as his Life was admired, and doated on: and unleſs the ſame kind Providence has otherwiſe deſign'd it, ſtrange changes, and decays muſt likely happen both in Church, and State. Juſt the reverſe of this, both as to Mercy and Judgment, God intends the World, in the Life and Death of a Wicked, a Fooliſh, a Tyrannical, and degenerous Prince. For as he cannot deſerve the love of his own People, he conſequently will not be able to procure the fear of his Neighbours. Either he will ſuffer himſelf, and his Subjects to diſſolve in Sloth, and Luxury; or he will diſpirit them with Violence and Oppreſſion, or betray them by his Cowardice and Folly. A People will droop, as if under the Reign and Guidance of ſome Malignant Planet, having neither Courage to oppoſe their Enemies, nor Spirit to Enrich and Advance themſelves. 'Tis only the *Exit* to ſuch an Inglorious Life and Reign, can reinſtate them in the poſſeſſion of their Hopes, and capacitate them for the Enjoyment of thoſe Mercies, which Heaven may deſign them. I might produce innumerable inſtances of this ſort, to confirm what I am proving: *viz.* That God ſerves his Providence of the Efficacy and Powers of Natural Cauſes, in his Preſidency over the World. But I haſten to another conſideration: *viz.*

Thirdly, That he ſuſpends or alters the ſettled courſe of Natural Laws, when they happen to obſtruct, or at leaſt do not forward the purpoſes and ends of his Government.

Though nothing can be wiſer or better order'd, than the ſettled courſe of ſecond Cauſes, in the conſtant and regular Production of their Effects; yet the laws of them, like the laws of Nations, being of great ſimplicity, and conſtituted for the general good of the Univerſe, can not always bend and comply to thoſe particular Moral Exigencies, which Men

Men may create by the perverſe uſe of their Liberty; and therefore God has reſerved to himſelf a tranſcendant Right (as it were a Court of Equity) of ſuſpending, or poſt-poning their Execution, to mitigate that rigorous procedure, and redreſs thoſe unequal Judgments, which might otherwiſe reflect upon his Wiſdom or his Juſtice. For why ſhould it be ſuppos'd that God who is the freeſt Agent, ſhould preſcribe himſelf ſuch Fatal and unalterable Laws, as might any ways controul the exerciſe of his Power, or tie the hands of his Providence, in his merciful and bounteous deſigns to his Creatures? He that made thoſe Laws for the good order of the Natural World, may well be allowed to ſuſpend, revoke, or alter them to ſerve an higher end, *i. e.* for the diſpenſations of his Grace, and the benefit of his Church and People. All the miracles which have ever been wrought, are ſo many demonſtrations of this Soveraign and free Power, which he has imploy'd for the manifeſtation of himſelf, and the ſervice of his Worſhippers: *As when the Fire had power in the Water, forgetting its own Vertue, and the Water forgat its own quenching Nature, and when the Flames waſted not the Fleſh of corruptible living things*; in all which, and the like inſtances, *God magnified his People and glorifyed them, and aſſiſted them in every Time and Place.* If it be ſaid, that the age of Miracles is paſt, and that the Lord no longer deals by ſuch extraordinary Methods with Mankind; we own that the ſign and the wonder, the oſtentatious part of Miracles is ceas'd. The Sun does not ſtand ſtill in *Gibeon*, nor the Moon in the Valley of *Ajalon*. God does not work Prodigies, to amaze and confound his Enemies, or to convince his own People of the truth of his Revelations, which have already been ſo abundantly atteſted by thoſe powerful Credentials. But whoever from hence will conclude, that he never ſuperſedes the ordinary courſe of things, that he does not ſometimes withhold,

Wiſd. 19. 20, &c.

or

or promote, or ſtop, and revolt the Wheels of Nature in their Roats, for the relief of the Good and Righteous, or the puniſhment of Atheiſtical and Wicked Men; muſt be driven to this Concluſion, that the Church of *Chriſt* is leſs dear to him than that of *Moſes*, and that a Chriſtian has not equal pretenſions to the care of Providence, with a Jew: But if this were ſo, what imaginable encouragement could be left to our Prayers, in our Difficulties or Diſtreſſes, which yet God has commanded us to make, and has promiſed to hear and grant? When our Blood boils within us, and a Raging Fever drinks up our Spirits, to what purpoſe ſhall we have recourſe to God for help, if the Diſeaſe muſt equally ſpend its force, and the Remedies be as ineffectual, as if inſtead of Praying we had Blaſphemed? They *that go down to the Sea in Ships* (ſays the Pſalmiſt) *and do buſineſs in great Waters, Theſe ſee the Works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiſeth the ſtormy Wind which lifteth up the Waves thereof. They mount up to the Heaven, they go down to the depths: Their Soul is melted becauſe of trouble. They reel to and fro, and ſtagger like a Drunken Man, and are at their wits end:* as he Elegantly deſcribes their condition in a Tempeſt. *Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he brings them out of their diſtreſſes.* But to little purpoſe it would be for the Mariners to cry unto the Lord in hopes of Deliverance, if he ſuffer'd the Winds and Waves to take their full ſwinge in wrecking their fury upon the defenceleſs Veſſel, and he vouchſafed not *to rebuke the Winds, and to ſay unto the Sea, Peace, be ſtill.* Such Miracles as theſe we make no doubt but God works every day for the benefit of thoſe, who in their troubles heartily and devoutly call upon him. Yet if any ſhall ſtill contend, as ſome have done, That it is below the dignity and nature of an Univerſal, and Immutable Being, to deviate from his general Will, in theſe particular exceptions, and contradictions to it; theſe

Pſal. 107. 23, &c.

may

may be also satisfied, without receeding from what has been said, by considering

Fourthly, That God intereſſes his Angels in affairs here below, and makes them Miniſter to the neceſſities and advantage of Mankind.

In the Infancy, and uninlightned ages of the World, if God had any ſpecial Meſſage to reveal, or Buſineſs to tranſact with the Sons of Men, his Angels were his Ambaſſadors, Commiſſion'd to perform it in his Name; and as they themſelves appear'd with a viſible Pomp, and Authority, ſo they diſcharged their Office in the Face of the World, and thereby aſſerted the Truth of the Revelation, and the Soveraign Power of the Revealer. But ſince thoſe Miniſters have withdrawn themſelves from that manifeſt commerce, we are more in the dark concerning the extent of their Province, and the actual exerciſe of their Power: Nevertheleſs ſince in Scripture we read of Kingdoms committed to the care of Angels, and hear of *the Princes of* Perſia, *and of* Greece, *and of* Michael *the Prince that Protected Iſrael.* Since we are aſſured that *they are all Miniſtring Spirits, ſent forth to Miniſter for them, who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation:* We cannot doubt but they ſtill mingle themſelves with humane Intereſts, and by the appointment of their Almighty Lord, ingage their Power in influencing both the publick Policies, and private Tranſactions of the World: We are apt enough to believe there are evil and lying Spirits, which diligently wait to betray us into Sin and Miſery; and why ſhould we ſo reproach the Mercy and Goodneſs of God, as to think he has not counterpoiz'd thoſe evil deſigns with the auſpicious Protection of more Charitable, and Benevolent Natures; which being ſo, we need not nicely diſpute how far God himſelf may Perſonally operate in the ſuſpenſion or application of his general Laws, to our particular neceſſities, there being the

Dan. 10. 20. 12. 1.

Heb. 1. 14.

the ſame Mercy of Providence on God's part, and the ſame obligation to gratitude, and adoration on ours, whether he in Perſon takes this immediate care of us, or in ſubſervience to his Will has appointed Deputies to this purpoſe, and given his Angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways. I ſhall add but one conſideration more, of the manner of God's Providential Proceeding, and that is *Pſ.* 91. 11.

Laſtly, That he mannages the whole reſult of all ſorts of Powers, and Motions, both in the Natural, and Moral World, ſo as to make all things however repugnant to his Will, or inconſiſtent with one another, harmoniouſly conſpire in the producing thoſe effects, which his Wiſdom has pre-determin'd; which conſideration I do not mention as diſtinct from the reſt, but as the ſumm and comprehenſion of them all. This is the great Maſtery and perfection of the Divine Policy, to act upon ſuch thorough views as infallibly to attain its ends, though by ways that ſeem never ſo contrary to, or incompetible with them. Thus St. *Paul* contemplating the myſterious depths of the Divine Providence, in the reciprocal Diſpenſations of Mercy, to the Jews and Gentiles; in that the unbelief of the Jews ſhould adminiſter to the Faith of the Gentiles; and the bringing in the Fullneſs of the Gentiles, at length turn to the Salvation of the Jews; breaks out into an ecſtaſie of Admiration. *Oh! the depth of the Riches, both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God; how unſearchable are his Judgments, and his ways paſt finding out?* Doubtleſs this is an Abyſs, that no created *Rom.* 11. 33 underſtanding can fathom. 'Tis that infinite mind alone, which at one ſteady, and unchangeable view, takes in the whole Eternal round of Cauſes and Effects, which can either ſufficiently admire, or comprehend the reaches of its own Wiſdom. But notwithſtanding our inability to ſee far into the Divine Councels; we are confident that nothing falls out but by the Appointment of an Heavenly Father, who is ſo intimately

 conſcious

conſcious to our minuteſt concerns: that, to expreſs it, *the very Hairs of our head* are ſaid to *be numbred by him.* Mat. 10. 30. And 'tis the foundation of the greateſt hope, and ſecurity to us Chriſtians, to *know that all things ſhall work together for Good to them that love God.* Rom. 8. 28. Even the Sin and Evil, and Folly and Raſhneſs of Men, things moſt repugnant to his Nature, and Will, ſhall one way or other tend to illuſtrate the wonderful extent of his Wiſdom, who from the Darkneſs and Confuſion of a Chaos, could raiſe the Auguſt Fabrick of a World; and from the more horrid diſtractions of Sin and Madneſs, can ſtrike out the moſt beautiful, and uniform deſigns for the Happineſs and Encouragement of his Servants: How otherwiſe could *Joſeph* have riſen to little leſs than Royal Dignity, by means that, humanely ſpeaking, tended only to Miſery and Perdition? Could the purpoſes of Revenge, and Hatred in his Brethren to deſtroy him; of Covetouſneſs in Merchants to ſell, and inſlave him; of diſappointed Luſt in an inraged Woman, to Impriſon him; have ever been conceived to be gradual ſteps to his ſaving both *Iſrael* and *Ægypt?* Yet theſe and a number of other as unlikely preſages to Advancement, were ordain'd by God the neceſſary preparations for it. But 'tis more amazing to follow the Clue of God's wonderful Oeconomy in all thoſe perplex'd Labyrinths through which he deduced his great purpoſe, of raiſing the Poſterity of fallen Man by the Seed of the Woman, the Meſſiah of the World. *The Kings of the Earth ſtood up, and the Rulers took Counſel together againſt the Lord, and againſt his Anointed.* All Earthly Powers conſpired to deſtroy him in the Root, in his Progenitors, or to cut off the Righteous branch of *Jeſſe:* But how vain were their imaginations, and raſh and fooliſh their endeavours when God had determin'd to *ſet his King upon his Holy Hill of Sion?* *Pſ.* 2. Our ſhort-ſighted knowledge can comprehend but a few, and thoſe the moſt obvious Links in this

this wonderful Chain of Providence, but yet enow to humble us in our own thoughts, and to teach us *that there is no Wiſdom, nor Underſtanding, nor Counſel againſt the Lord.* Which point being ſufficiently clear'd, I come to the ſecond general, to diſcover briefly

Secondly, The Intention, or Ends, and Reaſons of God's thus interpoſing his Providence in the Government of humane affairs and actions; and theſe in general are two. Firſt, The Temporal Proſperity and Security of his Church and People. Secondly, The exerciſing thoſe Vertues and Graces in them, which are neceſſary to their Eternal Happineſs. Firſt, The Temporal Proſperity and Security of his Church and People. There are two great Evils which in this preſent diſorder'd ſtate of the World, violently break in upon the Wellfare and Happineſs of Mankind, and are very great Reaſons to induce an Omnipotent God to inſpect and govern humane affairs: theſe are the deſtructive uſe of the Liberty of their own Minds: and the irreſiſtible violence of external Bodies: one great ſhare of Mens infelicity happening to them by the deſign'd wickedneſs of their Neighbours; and another portion of miſery accruing, by the unpremeditate injuries of outward accidents, which no foreſight could prevent or remedy. So that theſe neceſſities ſeem to have ſuperinduced a peculiar Order of Providence, which an unſinning ſtate did not ſtand in need of: For as it was a ſtate of Innocence, there was no moral evils to diſturb the quiet and felicity of Man; and being a ſtate of Happineſs, we may be certain too, natural evils grew out of exteriour Bodies to afflict and grieve a Righteous Soul. The courſe of Nature was then ſubſervient to the order of Grace, till Sin and Evil entring, broke and confounded the happy Connexion, and obliged *God to lay to his hand when Man had deſtroyed his Law.* We know then that the preſent ſtate of the World is ſuch as juſtly calls for an over-ruling Providence, both to ſtill the Raging of the

Sea, and to controul the other Elements, and alſo to reſtrain the Madneſs and Wickedneſs of the People: that ſo neither the deſign'd Malice of the one, nor the blind and inſenſate Fury of the other, may paſs the bounds which the Almighty ſets them. Were it not for ſuch an unconfin'd Soveraignty of God, his Worſhippers would be the moſt wretched and forſaken People living. They would lie at the Mercy of a wicked and deſperate Race, and be ſubject to the Outrage and Violence of every other Creature; and that without Refuge, and without Hopes. Nay how can we conceive but that the Face of a Viſible Church, had long ſince diſappear'd, had it not been for the aſſurance of a Divine Preſence, and aſſiſtance to the End of the World? The Impious Rage, and Enmity of Earthy Powers, had e're this effac'd the memory of it; and excluded the belief of a Deity, no leſs than of a Providence; from the Minds of Men; eſpecially, if that Brood of Evils, which Nature teems with, were permitted to take part with the Wickedneſs of Man, in diſheartning Religion and Piety towards God: What deſtructions might Deluges, Earthquakes, and Conflagrations e'er this, have brought upon the Earth, had they conſtantly been ſuffer'd to exert their natural, and unbroken ſtrength? and if Thunder, and Lightning, Storm and Tempeſt, Heat and Cold, Poiſons and Peſtilences, were diſcharged from the Regions of the air we breath in, in their genuine and native Force, and Providence interpos'd not to prevent their effects, or over-rule them to an excellent end; the beſt of Men would labour under a worſe fate than *Cain*; and imagine not only that every Man, but that every part of Nature was arm'd againſt them to deſtroy them. But all theſe fears and deſpondencies are removed, by the aſſurance God has given of his conſtant Care and Vigilance over his Church and People.

Secondly, The ſecond end and reaſon of Divine Providence, in the Government of the World, is the exerciſing thoſe

thoſe our Vertues and Graces, which ſupport it and depend upon it, and are neceſſary qualifications for Eternal Happineſs. What would become of our Chriſtian Faith and Hope, of our Confidence and Patience, of our Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt, if we were not aſſured there was a good God who prevented our Sufferings and Afflictions, or ſupported us under them, or rewarded us for them. If he were unconcern'd at the Succeſſes, or Misfortunes of our preſent Life, of what uſe would be a great part of our Services and Devotions? Why ſhould we pray unto him for temporal Mercies, or return thanks for Benefits received? To what purpoſe were our preſent Solemnity of pouring out our hearts in Praiſe and Thankſgiving to God, for reſtoring Peace to our Nation, and Bleſſing his Majeſty's Councels, and indeavours in promoting it; if there were nothing in the whole event, but what was owing to humane Strength and Policy, and the natural courſe of things? And therefore as the ſenſe of Providence begets in the Wiſe, and Good, Pious and devout Affections; invigorates their Vertues and Graces, and the ends of Religion are ſerved by the belief of it: So God will magnify himſelf in the diſappointments of the wicked: and by overthrowing their infidel purpoſes, and reſiſting their indeavours make them at laſt confeſs, that it is he alone that Rules in the Kingdoms of Men. Leſt the humble and meek ſhould deſpair and faint, and the proud boyſterous Sinners triumph in their power; he makes the ſucceſs of things unequal to their Cauſes, *ſo that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the Battel to the ſtrong.* For which reaſon our Church devoutly acknowledging the Poverty and Weakneſs of humane Forces, unleſs in dependance on the Favour and Providence of Almighty God; ever accompanies the efforts of our Fleets, and Armies, with her Prayers; and returns the Praiſe and Honour of all Succeſs to God, in thoſe dutiful Reſentments and Thankſgivings which ſhe offers. Which leads me to the third thing propos'd. Thirdly,

Thirdly, To apply these Considerations to that particular Providence, and Mercy of God which we now commemorate: A Mercy so extraordinary and surprizing, that our Joys will hardly give leave to our Thoughts to represent it; A Mercy which this Nation has long hoped for, and long prayed for; and in the pursuit of it has expended a great deal of Blood and Treasure; but has at length obtain'd, under the Glorious Conduct of our Great Soveraign, concurring with Almighty Providence, in the birth of a Happy and Honourable Peace, of which he has so long travail'd: How great a Blessing Peace is after the long toils and expences of War every People is sufficiently sensible; but setting aside the common advantages, that which renders it inestimable to these Kingdoms, is that hereby they are establish'd upon a firm and unshaken foundation; a work which being hitherto retarded, and undermin'd, was reserv'd for the Reign of Him, who seems destin'd by Providence, for the redress of oppress'd Nations, and the safety and deliverance of *Europe* I shall not be thought to detract from his Courage, or his Wisdom, when I say he has been made the great instrument of Providence, in healing the Wounds of divided Christendom; and unravelling those great events, which have lain for Ages wrapt up in the dark folds of Time. He must be obstinately blind who will not at least perceive a Divine Hand in the whole Scene of his Actions, and confess that so large a Field of Glory, was appointed for his Heroick Vertues to expatiate in. Indeed his Life in the many great turns of it, seems to be wholly Miraculous; and all those vast difficulties which constantly encountred his aspiring Honour, design'd by Heaven to Illustrate the Greatness of his Merit, and to make his Vertues unparallel'd, and Triumphant. If we view him more particularly, and nearer home, in the late wonderful Revolutions, what less then a Divine Power could have so happily establish'd him on his Throne; What else could

could have turn'd the Hearts of a great People, as of one Man: and have broken all thoſe meaſures, which were laid for the ruine of our Liberties and Religion? what elſe could have encouraged him to undertake the Cauſe of diſtreſs'd *Europe*, againſt the over-grown Power of an ambitious Nation; or have enabled him to humble her in the heighth of her Victories and Succeſſes, ſo as to make her ſtoop to the modeſt requeſts of Peace, and narrower Limits of Dominion? who but ſuch a Prince, and under a Divine Direction, could have retrieved the Ancient Spirit, and Valour, together with the high Reputation of theſe Realms; and thereby extinguiſht a flaming War, that depopulated and laid waſt the beſt cultivated part of the Earth? He that will aſcribe ſuch Effects as theſe to meer Naval Preparations, and Field Forces, under the ſole guidance of a Cabinet Council; muſt be obliged to own his disbelief of a God, or at leaſt that he has any intereſt in the Government of the World. For if Humane Wiſdom could have prevail'd, where were there more refined Policies than in a Neighbouring Court? If Humane Force, where were there ſuch mighty Preparations againſt the day of Battel? Inſomuch, that I know not in what inſtance the adorable Wiſdom of Providence is more conſpicuous, than in cauſing a Nation, which hardly any Foreign Force could ſhake, to ſink under the weight of her own grandeur, and grow leſs by her Conqueſts: Thoſe toils which ſhe ſpread to a vaſt extent for the Captivating other Kingdoms, have providentially exhauſted her own Bowels, and left the decaying Bulk of Power to be recruited by the gentler Methods of Peace and Tranquility; and in the diſappointment of all her lofty Projects, and gigantick Undertakings, we have an undoubted Teſtimony afforded to this truth, *That there is no Wiſdom, nor Underſtanding, nor Counſel againſt the Lord; that the Horſe is prepared againſt the day of Battel, but ſafety is of the Lord.*

To

To the Lord therefore we aſcribe our Peace and Safety: The Safety of our Perſons, and our Properties, but eſpecially the Safety of our Church: and here I beg leave to remind you of your Duties to Thankfullneſs and Gratitude upon this occaſion; in that there is not any Church on Earth, that has had more Signal Providences, to approve it the immediate Care and Concern of Heaven, than this we are Members of. How often has it been ready to be ſwallowed up, as if it were to magnify the goodneſs of God in its Preſervation! What Method of a Miraculous Providence, has been wanting to Confirm its Eſtabliſhment? Open Violence and Secret Conſpiracies to deſtroy and undermine it, have ſtill been over-rul'd by that Almighty Arm which protects it to its greater Glory and Security: Witneſs an *Invincible Armado*, threatning our Kingdom with perpetual Slavery of Soul and Body, diſpers'd and ruin'd by the irreſiſtable Power of God, *who* *wiſd.* 5. 17, 22. *makes the Creature his Weapon for the Revenge of his Enemies, and cauſes a mighty Wind to ſtand up againſt them, and blow them away.* Witneſs the dark deſigns of Hell, to deſtroy our Laws and Law-makers, our Church and State at one blow, betrayed and confounded by a kind of ſupernatural, and prophetical impreſſion on the Spirit of our Prince: Nay that which is more amazing, the Blood of our Royal Martyr, wherewith the Life and Soul of our Religion ſeem'd to expire; how has it by the wonderful appointment of Heaven proved the ſeed of the Church? The *Wrath of Man* in that deſperate and unheard of Wickedneſs *has turn'd to the praiſe of God*; in that the bleſſings which this Church and Nation at this day enjoy, under the happy Protection of our preſent Soveraign, have a viſible dependance and connexion with the fatal Event. Who can chuſe but admire and adore the goodneſs of God, who has not ſuffer'd our Wickedneſs to make us miſerable as we have deſerved; but whenever his

his threatnings or his judgments have wrought in us a deep sense of our Sins, and Sorrow for them, has still manifested his mercy in our Deliverance! If he has formerly suffer'd the Lustre of our Church to be eclyps'd, 'tis probably that it might at least shine with a brighter vigour, under his gracious Patronage, whom he has made the Author of our Peace, and the Defender of our Faith. For who can conceive but to this end God has raised him up, and Cover'd his head so often in the day of Battel; that to this end his Angels have taken care, that whilst Thousands fell on his right hand, and on his left, the Arrows of Death have not come nigh him? May the same good Providence persevere to Protect and Defend Him, who has, at the Hazard of his Life, so often Defended us: and may our Thankfulness to God, and grateful Obedience to his Vicegerent, deserve that he may long Reign over us, and late exchange a Temporal for an Eternal Crown.

All the Application I shall make shall be taken from the words of the *Psalmist* upon the like occasion. *I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak Peace unto his People, and to his Saints, but let them not turn again to folly.* 'Tis the provoking Folly of our Sins that has induced God to Unsheath the Sword upon us, as the severest of National Punishments. But our Repentance or Chastisements have at last atton'd his Anger, in causing him to put an end to War, and *speak Peace again unto his People*: and 'tis now at our own extream Peril, if we return to those Sins and Follies for which we have already suffer'd. God has given us Peace, and with it, has put into our hands all those Blessings which are the Materials of our Temporal Happiness; so that nothing seems to be required on our parts, but to prepare and qualify our hearts for the Enjoyment. If we shall inlarge our Souls with Joy and Gratitude, in proportion to these Mercies, we may reasonably expect, *Psal.* 85. 8.

the Continuance and Succession of them: But if we prove such insensible Wretches, as no bounds can satisfy; If we are Impatient and Querulous, and deal with God and our Prince, as did the murmuring *Israelites* in the Desart, we may justly apprehend that these our Follies, will recal those Judgments, which are now so happily past over us; and expose our Church and Nation to a more irrevocable Sentence.

Now we are made whole, let us go and Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto us.

FINIS.